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### Nesting of the Water Ouzel.

BY J. M. WILLARD, OAKLAND, CAL.

[Read before the Northern Division of the Cooper Orn. Club, Sept. 3, 1898.]

JOHN MUIR'S chapter on the Water Ouzel in his "Mountains of California" aroused a great interest in me when I found them nesting on Pescadero Creek. Pescadero Canon is in the heart of a great forest of redwood, spruce and pine which covers the mountains for miles on every side. The stream is of good size and the lower eight miles before it finds the sea is of easy slope. During the spring of 1897 and 1898 I made several trips to this creek and on May 23-24, 1898, nine nests were found.

When we awoke on the morning of May 22 it seemed that after raining almost all night, the clouds had settled down over the mountains, soaking the interior of the trees where the rain had failed to reach. We left our wheels at the mountain house and started afoot over the 18 miles of wet forest road which lay between us and a ranch where we were to stop. Once over the ridge we could see miles of great redwoods, while in the hazy distance was the second ridge, yet to be crossed before we reached the foot of the grade. Under a large bridge that crossed the stream was an Ouzel's nest which was examined by letting my companion down until he could reach it. The nest was incomplete, lacking the lining. The moss of which it was composed was still wet from the soaking the old birds had given it, for when they build a nest each piece of moss is soaked in the stream, the birds dipping it again and again.

Leaving the stream we started over the second ridge and reached Pescadero Creek. Here we found two more nests, both inaccessible, as they were placed under bridges over which the road passed. Both were finished and one contained young; the latter nest was at least thirty feet above the water and from below looked like a ball of green moss six inches in diameter. Beside it was a last year's nest, gray with dust that had sifted through from above. A great stratum of sandstone pushed out

into the stream between these two bridges and on the up-stream side the rock rounded and then dropped straight into the rushing water. In a shallow cleft, overhung by a large cluster of ferns, was another nest. This cleft was parallel to the water, and about three feet above it, and its edges were so rounded that the nest had a very insecure base,—in fact, when I let my friend down by the heels to reach it, it fell into his hands at first touch. As this nest is typical I will describe it. In front it looked like a large ball of green moss, with a round opening in the middle about an inch and a half in diameter. The walls were of moss, two inches thick in front, but much thinner next the rock. A sparse lining of small water-soaked twigs was used; but sometimes the lining is of grass or is dispensed with entirely. The outer surface of the nest was roughly finished, looking like the moss-covered rock itself, while the inside was comparatively smooth. I climbed down to a rock in the stream nearly in front of the nest and but a few feet away. Immediately a bird flew from it and alighted on a rock, where, after courtesying a few times in the comical way usual with Dippers, she flew up stream and we saw her no more. This nest contained four eggs in which incubation was far advanced.

Last June I removed an empty nest from this identical location and on July 23, 1898, I found still another in the same place, also empty. All were identical except in linings, that of June 1897 being of grass, of May 1898, of twigs, while the nest of July 1898 had no lining at all. The following day we went over the mountains to another canon. Our first nest here was oval-shaped and placed on the shelf of a high, overhanging cliff, directly above the water. As we approached, the parent left, she having been feeding her young. The broken egg shells had been pushed from the nest into the water where they could be plainly seen. I knelt on my friend's shoulders and he waded into the pool.

When I touched the nest the five young ones started up their clatter, and renewed it from time to time for nearly an hour. When the parents came back one went into the nest but flew away almost immediately and was soon followed by its mate. The nest was nine inches long by seven high, its opening two inches across; it was lined with soaked sticks. The young were dark-skinned and partially feathered.

Proceeding up the stream some 200 yards I saw another Ouzel with a large worm in her beak. She was very tame and allowed me to approach within ten feet. Then I sat down on a log while she stood on a rock in mid-stream, courtesying from side to side and twitching her tail. Soon she flew past me down stream to her nest on a moss-covered clay bank, about eight feet above the running water. It was not so well built as the others and more bulky. The young were nearly feathered, as one little fellow showed by crawling into the opening to look out. Almost half a mile down stream from this one, past the cliff nest where the parents were industriously feeding their babies, we found another nest. At this point in the canon the stream ran over bedrock for several hundred feet, at an angle of about thirty degrees. The water ran very swiftly in a natural sluice, worn out of the solid slate. This sluice was about five feet wide, close to a deep cliff, and on a shelf of this cliff, several feet above the foam of the stream, was an Ouzel's nest. Needless to say I did not disturb it as it contained birds.

At the foot of the incline just mentioned, the water struck a great rock, rebounded into the air and fell twenty or thirty feet into a large, deep pool. On either side of this pool the cliffs rose hundreds of feet, sheer on one side and overhanging on the other, stopping all passage down stream. On the farther side of the pool was a shallow cave above which another pair of Ouzels had built their nest on a projection of rock. The young must have been pretty well grown and kept up a great clatter. On returning to Pescadero Canon a boy showed me another nest of this interesting bird. This one was built in the roots of an upturned tree which the

stream had undermined. The water flowed directly under and about three feet below the nest, which contained four fresh eggs. On July 20, 1898, I was again in Pescadero Canon and located still another nest in the roots of an old tree which had floated down stream and lodged under a great rock. There were young in the nest and at that late date they must have been nearly matured. Thus out of nine nests found May 22, 23 and 24, one had fresh eggs, one incubated eggs, one was incomplete and the others held young of varying ages.

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### **Early Hummingbirds' Nesting.**

With accustomed regularity the hummingbirds are found nesting in California soon after the dawn of the New Year. The severity or mildness of the winters affect them not at all and a walk in January will usually disclose one or more of the tiny creatures buzzing about the cypress trees where the early nests are more often placed. Mr. Walter E. Bryant records the first nest and eggs of *C. anna* for 1899, at Santa Rosa, Cal. January 28. On February 12 I collected a nest of two eggs near Mt. View, Santa Clara, Cal., in which incubation was well begun. The nest was in a cypress tree, built on a twig rather close to the trunk.

C. BARLOW, Santa Clara, Cal.

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### **House Finches Again.**

Experience has taught me that House Finches *may* nest anywhere. I have found them occupying nests of orioles, towhees, grosbeaks, cliff swallows, blackbirds and portions of hawks' abodes; besides tin cans, old hats and stove pipes and now I shall add hollow limbs. One bird entering the opening of a small cavity actually squeezed her way back for two and a half feet to sit on her eggs in total darkness. Another reared her brood in the deep cavity of a Californian Woodpecker in an oak while a third selected a similar hole in a telegraph pole. The latter contained six eggs. ERNEST ADAMS, San Jose, Cal.